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## A Culture of Dissent

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In 1949 Edward Thompson was an adult education tutor living in the West Riding of Yorkshire and, for the most part, a loyal member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (hereafter CPGB). In both his Party journalism and adult education classes, Thompson saw literature providing the key to unlocking the revolutionary potential of the working class, however slow his readers and students might be to pick up on this. One class persisted in preferring Elizabeth Gaskell, John Galsworthy, and Warwick Deeping to any ‘highbrow stuff’ their tutor subjected them to: D.H. Lawrence, Shakespeare, ‘or poetry of any description’.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Thompson maintained that literature *had* to be taught: At Shepley, a small industrial valley, it is necessary to grapple more realistically with problems of standards and popular culture. It is unlikely that the active trade-unionist will find himself a specialist interest in problems of literary criticism or ‘intellectual climate’. Must he therefore be denied an opportunity to gain acquaintance with major works of literature under qualified guidance? Even if the going is hard and the results unspectacular, this sort of class *must* be kept alive, with the proviso that the work should always be at the top capacity of the better students. Any other course might mean the abandonment of working-class education in favour of ... the further isolation of an elite.<sup>2</sup> This article examines the formative role which literature played within the early years of the British New Left. Particular literary stances came to typify the movement’s struggle to define an ideology and way of life alternative to the vicissitudes of both Western capitalism and the totalitarian extremes of Soviet Communism. Literary criticism, which almost by definition opposed complacency, dogmatic obedience, and unthinking materialism, was a natural ally of any group which sought a significant new way of thinking about culture, society and politics. Whilst the networks of intellectuals, writers, readers, and activists which coalesced around the *Reasoner* and *New Reasoner* (hereafter *NR*) (1956–9), *University and Left Review* (hereafter *ULR*) (1957–9), and latterly *New Left Review* (hereafter *NLR*) (1960–), have primarily been treated from a political and theoretical standpoint, I argue that they were responding to particular literary ideas and debates within the particular British and international literary scene of the 1950s and early 1960s. Like other magazines—from Popular Front precursors such as *Left Review*, *Our Time*, and *Arena*, to recently defunct literary quarterlies such as *Horizon*, *Politics and Letters*, and *Scrutiny*, as well other magazines such as the *New Statesman* and *Encounter* which devoted significant space to literary reviews—*NR*, *ULR*, and *NLR* sought to bring literary, cultural, political, and social writing together within an interpretative framework of British society. To suggest that the New Left favoured a wider anthropological definition of ‘Culture’ over a narrower definition of ‘Literature’ fundamentally misreads the concerns of the movement during its early years, and risks establishing a false dichotomy between ‘high art’ and ‘low culture’ or populism and elitism which had little traction.

Nick Bentley is right to suggest that the New Left and the wider literary movement in the 1950s should be treated as part of a broader cultural reaction to the stagnant contemporary social and political climate.<sup>3</sup> *ULR*, in particular, was responsible for penetrating criticisms of the ‘Angry Young Men’ literature of the early 1950s, and for championing a new generation of authors and playwrights including John Arden, John Braine, Shelagh Delaney, Alan Sillitoe and Arnold Wesker whose work, whilst drawing on similar themes about the nature of class society, offered some hope in terms of political commitment. The New Left was as much a cultural movement as it was an intellectual and political one and this article examines a number of ways in which the early New Left discussed, dealt with, and viewed literature and how it came to characterize the early movement.

The humane values of literature, as well as its ability to critique present society, would, it was hoped, transform the way people saw, thought, and most importantly, felt about the world around them. The New Left sought to discover a vital literary basis which would sustain a political movement akin to that of the Popular Front of the 1930s in which poets such as W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Cecil Day Lewis produced their greatest work during their brief flirtations with Communism. Spender, in particular, became a key critic of Marxism, editing the CIA-funded Anglo-American literary journal *Encounter* (discussed below in the wider context of literary censorship). In his essay ‘Outside the Whale’, Thompson depicted the revival of the Popular Front of the 1930s as a vital left-wing bulwark against both Fascism and the excesses of the Communist Party, which his journal sought to continue. Yet New Left writers were also painfully aware that these Popular Front writers, and many others who had espoused a youthful radicalism, had become disillusioned with the cause and critical of the Left. The perils of the ‘God that failed’ outlook (named after the 1949 book of that title) risked turning those who had lost the faith into apologists of

American and 'Natopolitan' imperialism.<sup>4</sup> The New Left saw in literature the power to transcend the ideological struggles that threatened to co-opt it into the cultural Cold War. Though literature necessarily operated within a social and political context, and possessed a political and social meaning, it could not become a mere part of the struggle.

Rather than pointing towards a unified literary approach of the New Left, this article emphasizes a variety of conceptions of the role and purpose of literature within the movement. I begin by discussing the *NR*'s attempt to distinguish its literary views from Communism and subsequently its opposition to literary censorship. The article then discusses the differing intellectual and cultural background of *ULR* and its greater concern with assessing the literature produced by the 'Angry Young Men' generation of the 1950s, which engaged heavily with the problems of British class society. The New Left was important for cultivating and promoting a number of literary works produced by left-wing authors. The article concludes by suggesting that the changing cultural scene and attitude to the social role of literature after 1960 echoed the growing sense of the New Left's failure to become a mainstream movement of social and political opposition. For Perry Anderson, and other younger members who took over editorship of the journal in 1962, rejected the emphasis on the idealistic transforming power of literature as symptomatic of the wider intellectual impasse of a culturally conservative and parochial 1950s society.<sup>5</sup> The literary moment of the New Left passed, allowing younger authors to move beyond the obsession with class to address the ever-widening cultural horizons of 1960s Britain, encapsulating both the end of the Chatterley ban and the Beatles' first LP.

## English Traditions

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Whilst *Reasoner* and *NR* were forged by their opposition to the policies of Communism in Russia, in Hungary, and in Britain, the journals also set out to match political values with cultural ones. For Edward Thompson, both journals were natural continuations of a longer cultural tradition which the CPGB once, but no longer, represented. Writing to his co-editor, John Saville, Thompson stressed that the real roots of the journal were not the dry theoretical debates, but something far more vital: 'This is NOT the learned or academic tradition: it IS the tradition of a certain sort of politico-cultural journalism (Swift and Hazlitt) in Britain'.<sup>6</sup> Writing to G.D.H. Cole, Thompson stressed that alongside the aims of a theoretical rethinking of Communism, and providing internationalist links with dissident Communists in Poland and the Eastern Bloc, the journal would also strive in 'the field of creative writing, reportage, the essay—the re-affirmation of socialist values'.<sup>7</sup> Should *NR* succeed in its aims, Thompson remarked, 'we will find that we are dealing increasingly with the "cultural side,"—questions of tradition, of personal motivation, discussions of questions of value'.<sup>8</sup> After the journal had (more or less) seen off the spectre of the Communist Party's embrace in its early years, *NR* was free to pursue these wider cultural questions and to consider what a literature of Marxist Humanism might look like.

These claims, which animated *NR*, had a significant prehistory within CPGB journalism, which traced a line of radical dissent from its earliest forms through anti-industrialist writers and critics to the Popular Front journalism of the 1930s. Figures within the celebrated tradition of dissent, frequently celebrated in articles in *Left Review*, *Poetry and the People* and *Modern Quarterly* by writers such as Edgell Rickword, Alec West, Christopher Caudwell, Jack Lindsay, Randall Swingler, Ralph Fox, T.A. Jackson. Historical writers included John Ball, Piers Langland, Thomas More, Milton, Bunyan, Swift, Blake, Shelley, Dickens, Ruskin, and particularly William Morris, each of whom represented the natural evolution of romantic protest against oppression into that of orthodox Communism.<sup>9</sup>

The wartime success of the Communist Party's cultural efforts, such as Edgell Rickword and Jack Lindsay's bestselling anthology *Handbook of Freedom* (1939), were not capitalized upon in the post-war of Cold War cultural climate, where the Communist writer was increasingly seen as an outsider, or even an enemy, to the literary world.<sup>10</sup> Popular Front attitudes of Communist critics and writers came under growing censure from a Party that demanded increasing conformity on cultural matters dictated by Moscow. Lindsay and Caudwell (the latter posthumously) were attacked for espousing 'idealist' approaches to literature, with Lindsay having to publish a public recantation of his views.<sup>11</sup> Falling sales figures of the journal *Our Time* led to an incident in 1948 in which a number of Young Turk Communists, including David Holbrook, Arnold Rattenbury, and Edward Thompson, deposed Swingler and Rickword as editors, unwittingly playing into the hands of the Party's National Cultural Committee who criticized

the idealist leanings of the journal. The experience rankled with Thompson, who deeply regretted his complicity.<sup>12</sup> The new editorial committee ultimately failed to stop the haemorrhaging sales of the journal, whilst the older generation of writers either fell silent or quietly left the Party.<sup>13</sup> In the Cold War climate, the tradition of free-thinking radical Marxist journalism was effectively crushed between the rock of Party discipline and the hard place of the anti-Communist literary world.

The first editorial of *NR* made clear that the journal intended to continue where previous publications had left off: 'We have no desire to break impetuously with the Marxist and Communist traditions in Britain. On the contrary, we believe that this tradition, which stems from such men as William Morris and Tom Mann and which later found expression in the cultural field, in such journals as *LEFT REVIEW* and *MODERN QUARTERLY* is in need of rediscovery and re-affirmation'.<sup>14</sup> The first issue of *Reasoner* included a back page 'Culture-as-a-weapon and Heritage Corner', which revived a section from *Our Time*. The *NR* group was made up of many former CPGB members, including Lindsay, Swinger, Doris Lessing, Montagu Slater, and the artists and cartoonists James Boswell and Paul Hogarth. The third issue of *NR* featured a twelve-page insert celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of William Blake, with a critical reading of 'London' by W.P. Jessup (one of Thompson's pseudonyms), who took Blake's vision to be a critique of the capitalist system and the failings of bourgeois morality. In the editorial, Thompson defended the need for Socialist Humanism to celebrate literature as an embodiment of human value in the wider political and moral struggle: 'We believe that this vision, this theory, influencing the minds and actions of living men and women, are among those human forces which—in the end—are the only forces which can keep the bombers grounded and which can make the fruits of men's ingenuity into sources of human enrichment. We are not 'above the battle', for where is the battlefield if it is not within the human reason and consciousness.'<sup>15</sup> The early impetus behind *NR* lay in its attempt to recapture the vernacular cultural tradition of English radicalism by returning to an earlier style of Communist journalism.

### Overt and Covert Censorship and The Cold War Novel

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During the Cold War, networks of cultural patronage were seen as key to winning the battle for the hearts and minds of readers and writers, for both capitalism and communism.<sup>16</sup> Periodicals supported by the CPGB had to conform to a Party view on cultural matters increasingly dictated by Moscow. Guaranteed support for journals which followed the Party line (the Soviet Embassy gave up to £100,000 a year to maintain the Party newspaper, *The Daily Worker*)<sup>17</sup> exerted a powerful editorial influence on Communist journals and made dissent, or even the unbiased reporting of unfavourable events such as the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, almost impossible. The awarding of prestigious literary prizes such as the Nobel Prize to Cold War dissidents including Boris Pasternak; the incarceration of Ezra Pound; and the McCarthyite persecution of socialist writers in America, along with the suppression and imprisonment of countless outspoken writers and poets in the Eastern Bloc, destroyed any lingering notion that literature could be apolitical. The literary project of the New Left was a genuine attempt to create a cultural space which transcended and undermined Cold War binaries. This section looks at the ideological debates surrounding two novels supported by the New Left—John Berger's *A Painter of Our Time* and Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (both published in England in 1958)—and finally contrasts these with the hostility shown by members of the New Left towards a third novel, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1960), accused of diluting the importance of political commitment by placing it within a broader social and sexual framework.

Whilst falling short of the levels of McCarthyite America or Soviet Russia (or, for that matter, the CPGB), members of the British New Left encountered significant censorship at the hands of anti-Communist editors and publishers as well as appointment committees for university posts. Significant funds were spent to support pro-Western and anti-Communist journals, and *NR* and *ULR*'s lack of such a backer was significant in the harsh world of literary journalism. The immediate predecessor of *NR*, *Arena*, closed in 1951 after the CPGB withheld financial help and refused even to publicize its existence in official Party journals due to the heterodox line taken by its editors.<sup>18</sup> Even an organization as ostensibly benign as the British Council contained a strong ideological remit dictated by the British State and its intelligence services.<sup>19</sup> Unlike many other intellectual periodicals and cultural magazines with small circulations, *NR* and *ULR* relied on no external support from the Arts Council or from international bodies and charities such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom or the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller

Foundations, a fact frequently mentioned by the editors of *NR* struggling for funds from one issue to the next.<sup>20</sup>

The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the magazine *Encounter* (1953–91) were covertly funded by the CIA—in the words of Franklin Foer, ‘some of the best money that the Agency ever spent’<sup>21</sup>—with the aims of promoting liberal and anti-Marxist views.<sup>22</sup> Predictably, the journal seldom failed to criticize the New Left as essentially naïve and unoriginal, striking, as one commentator suggested, a ‘tiresome pose of moral superiority’.<sup>23</sup> John Saville, Thompson’s co-editor at *NR*, would subsequently trace the links between *Encounter*’s consistently anti-communist and pro-American editorial line and its financial backers back to the US State Department 2 years before the *New York Times*’ expose on the journal.<sup>24</sup> The letters pages of *ULR* became the site of a proxy-war between the editors of *Encounter* and the American sociologist Norman Birnbaum over the journal’s refusal to publish an article by Dwight Macdonald (a former contributing editor of *Encounter*) which was openly critical of the American government. As an irate Birnbaum argued, *Encounter*’s (as yet obscure) financial backers fundamentally compromised its editorial line, whilst the few unsupported journals such as *ULR* were the true champions of free expression and democracy.<sup>25</sup>

The controversy over the novel *A Painter of Our Time* by John Berger exposed the tensions of the Cold War literary climate in Britain. Berger, who after 1956 remained a heterodox member of the CPGB, had strong links with the New Left (an extract of the novel was initially published in *ULR*), but the ambiguous ending, in which the protagonist Janos Lavin rejects the hypocrisies of the British art world and returns to defend Hungarian Communism during the 1956 revolution, was too much for liberal critics to tolerate.<sup>26</sup> Stephen Spender, Richard Wollheim, and Paul Ignatus, members of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and frequent writers for *Encounter*, criticized Berger as, like his protagonist, an ‘unrepenting believer in Soviet Communism’ and condemned the novel as an apologia for totalitarianism.<sup>27</sup> After several months the book was removed from sale by Secker and Warburg, who also happened to be the publishers of *Encounter*.<sup>28</sup> The support offered by *ULR* and *NR* to writers on the left was significant in preserving their independence in an era of overt hostility (or worse, neglect), if not quite outright censorship. *NR* published poems, short stories, and articles by prominent foreign writers and poets including Jean-Paul Sartre, Tibor Dery, Nazim Hikmet, Bertolt Brecht, György Lukács, Adam Ważyk, Arthur Miller and others.<sup>29</sup> Literature provided an international language of protest for dissidents in both capitalist and communist societies. Above all others, Boris Pasternak was a talismanic writer for *NR*, espousing the triumph of the human spirit over oppression. Whilst much of the burgeoning literature on the ‘Pasternak affair’ highlights the ideological and political war over *Doctor Zhivago* between the Communist and Capitalist bloc, the New Left claimed Pasternak as a writer above the fray who used literature as a means of transcending the false ideological dichotomies imposed by the Cold War.<sup>30</sup> Even before the English translation of *Doctor Zhivago* was published in June 1958, *NR* had championed the achievement of Pasternak as a poet triumphing against Soviet censorship. The appeal of Pasternak for Russian audiences was less his status as a dissident as the direct unmediated appeal of his poetry, which showed the absurdities of the state determining what literature was. The author (whose identity was kept from Soviet authorities) recalled that ‘when, as happened once or twice, he forgot his lines and stood at a loss, there were many people to prompt him from memory, calling out the next line from their places. It would be hard to imagine a more splendid tribute to a living poet’.<sup>31</sup>

These views were not shared by Arnold Kettle, the most pre-eminent literary critic to remain within the CPGB after 1956. In Kettle’s opinion, Pasternak, and the New Left as a whole, was playing into American hands and unwittingly betraying the cause of socialism. For Kettle, the cultural struggle remained a sharp dichotomy between good and evil and between communism and capitalism. Though Kettle had been a colleague and friend of Thompson’s at Leeds (they organized an adult education conference on John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957), featuring the author),<sup>32</sup> their attitude towards the CPGB became a point of bitter contention. Kettle remained within the Party fold and established himself as key intellectual spokesman on cultural and political matters.<sup>33</sup> Predictably, he became a target of Thompson’s vituperative pen.<sup>34</sup> Kettle was accused by Thompson of carrying out Party hack-work and writing ‘casuistical letters to the “Manchester Guardian”’ condemning Pasternak.<sup>35</sup> Whilst Kettle considered *Doctor Zhivago* to have significant literary merit, and privately asked the CPGB to reconsider its position, the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to Pasternak in October 1958, followed 4 days later by Pasternak declining the award, under pressure from Soviet authorities, forced Kettle’s hand and led him to condemn Pasternak



wholesale.<sup>36</sup> Kettle viewed the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* in the West as ill-advised at best. He went so far as to condone the Soviet censorship of the work as well as arguing that it be withdrawn in the West, arguing that 'to put at a particular moment the interests of humanity, however imperfect, above those of a particular artist, however talented, is not necessarily ignoble or wrong'.<sup>37</sup>

Responding to a flurry of criticism in the paper, including by *NR* contributor Malcolm MacEwen, Kettle repeated his verdict that Pasternak's Nobel Prize for Literature—awarded so soon after the novel's publication in the West—was a purely political act and that Pasternak was little more than an American pawn.<sup>38</sup> Kettle, along with the Soviet critic of English Literature Valentina Ivasheva, author of a withering assault on the 'English Revisionists' of the New Left, saw *NR*'s attitude towards Pasternak as further evidence of complicity with the forces of reaction. *NR* translated a selection of these condemnatory articles to highlight their woeful inaccuracy.<sup>39</sup> Kettle was later to suggest that the literary attitude of the New Left was, in effect, a displacement for having abandoned active politics. As Kettle noted, engaged young people were far more likely to read the novels of John Braine and Colin MacInnes or to see the plays of John Osborne and Arnold Wesker than they were to care about the pronouncements of the New Left.<sup>40</sup> Iris Murdoch's *NR* review of Pasternak for was a plea for the necessary transcendence of the great artist over the political, previously outlined in her criticisms of Communism in the essay 'A House of Theory'.<sup>41</sup> She argued that poetic truth ought to directly inform political attitudes and not vice versa. Shelley's view that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind has fallen on bad days of late. A work such as *Zhivago* makes one realise how far a great artist can become the most profound consciousness of his time, deepening the understanding of his readers, and through this communion of understanding joining dissimilar peoples to each other. Seeking a name for the quality which makes this possible one is led to call it compassion, love.<sup>42</sup>

Despite championing writers against Cold War censorship (from both sides), *NR* struggled to accommodate writers such as Murdoch for whom politics was merely a single (albeit important) part of a composite identity. Murdoch, whose own bestselling literary fiction was far more concerned with the ethical nature of individuals, rather than society as a whole, was symptomatic of the subsequent drift away from political commitment of many writers.<sup>43</sup> Murdoch had been a member of the Communist Party as an undergraduate at Oxford in the early 1940s (recruiting Edward Thompson's older brother, Frank), but had increasingly distanced herself from active politics as a constraint on literary endeavour.<sup>44</sup>

Whilst Iris Murdoch later came to associate with the political right, supporting the Falklands War and suggesting that striking miners 'be put up against the wall and shot',<sup>45</sup> her contemporary Doris Lessing remained a lifelong socialist. Lessing's short story in the second issue of *NR*, 'The Day That Stalin Died', was a fitting literary expression of the emotional and intellectual break with Communism, conveying the sense of anguish, betrayal and loss in a way few other contributors could.<sup>46</sup> Her essay 'The Small Personal Voice' for the collection *Declaration* (1957) (also the target of Kettle's scorn),<sup>47</sup> had stressed the need for the writer to maintain some independence from politics in a space to write.<sup>48</sup> However, she was increasingly sceptical of the power of political affirmation and the wider mission of the New Left.

Lessing's third novel *The Golden Notebook* (1960) was the most significant literary work to emerge from the context of the New Left. Drawing on her own experiences, Lessing narrated the attempt of Anna Wulf to reconcile her own political, emotional, and mental experiences under the strain of a fragmented identity. Like her heroine, Lessing could no longer rely on politics as the sole means of reconciling or explaining these different experiences into one stable self. Lessing complained to Thompson that her books were not reviewed or even mentioned by New Left journals, unlike the works of many male authors far less active within the movement. Lessing suspected that they were viewed as insufficiently political, or rather because their artistic expression of politics did not fit with those of the movement.<sup>49</sup>

*The Golden Notebook* was, in fact, reviewed by a member of the New Left. Randall Swingler, her former *NR* co-editor, used the anonymity afforded by the *Times Literary Supplement* (*TLS*) to write a wounding review. Swingler saw the main fault of the disjointed book stemming from the 'total breakdown of a faith, a pattern of behaviour, a system of loyalties, from which spread all the tight consistency of her previous work'.<sup>50</sup> Though Swingler left the CPGB, he had not abandoned his faith in Communism as Lessing apparently had. Responding to a letter from Thompson, similarly criticizing the politics of *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing suggested that he had fundamentally misunderstood the book. For Lessing, this

was symptomatic of the movement's refusal to countenance the different perspectives of women. Lessing dismissed Thompson's criticism of its fragmentary nature, suggesting it was a 'highly *constructed* book, the point of which was the relation of its parts to each other. It was a novel about the kind of intellectual and emotional attitudes produced now, that people have now, and their relation to each other. Call that subjectivism and you confess you didn't read the book'.<sup>51</sup> Thompson demanded an affirmation of a political faith, transferred from the Party to the New Left. To Lessing, for whom the break with the Party had shown that political faith must be broadened to accommodate the 'small personal voice' of dissent, this was tantamount to propaganda and imposed an unacceptable constraint on the writer. Though Lessing continued to be a member of the group, joining the collective editorial board of *NLR* from 1960 to 1962, she was no longer active within the movement.<sup>52</sup>

### 'How Life Gets into Literature': Oxford and Academic Literary Criticism

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The *ULR* differed both as a journal and as a group from *NR* politically, intellectually, and culturally. Whilst, at least in its initial years, *NR* seemed dogged by the spectre of British Communism, and under Thompson remained largely polemical in tone, stressing its roots in provincial England, *ULR* was far more comfortable with metropolitan culture. In fact, it was far more interested by the rise of provincial writers. Conversely, *NR*'s internationalism was contrasted with *ULR*'s intense interest with domestic cultural and social issues, as Stuart Hall's essay 'In No Man's Land' demonstrated.<sup>53</sup> Whilst both groups were animated by the wider social meaning of culture, *ULR* was much more deeply concerned with the role of academic literary criticism. In part, this emerged from the interactions of a number of its members, including Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, with the Oxford University Delegacy for Extramural Studies, the most radical extramural department in the country, which employed a number of active or former Communists.<sup>54</sup> The Oxford Delegacy was part of a wider counter-cultural scene which provided a radical cultural space, at some intellectual distance from the university, memorably described in Dennis Potter's *The Glittering Coffin* (1960). This 'alternative Oxford' attracted numerous socially conscious working-class scholarship boys, radicals, lecturers, adult education tutors and even, through Ruskin College, the occasional bona-fide worker.<sup>55</sup>

Potter, who went on to write plays for both stage and television, was drawn to the group as an undergraduate at Oxford, noting that: 'Amongst the young Oxford Left, *Universities and Left Review* strikes both an emotional chord and a feeling of intellect and excitement', for whom 'the name of Hoggart is used as something of an incantation'.<sup>56</sup> University Proctors had attempted to cancel a production of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* staged by the Oxford University Labour Club, featuring Potter as the revolutionary judge Adzak, due to its seditious nature. It was only the intervention of senior Labour figures including Hugh Gaitskell (whose daughter was acting in the play) that pressured the authorities into allowing the production to go ahead.<sup>57</sup> Whilst such a high-handed act of philistinism was hardly commensurate with the treatment of Pasternak and other dissidents by the Soviet authorities, it did serve to reinforce in Potter's mind the notion that 'drama, or any other cultural activity for that matter, was a part of politics, and an important part of politics'.<sup>58</sup> However Potter, like Lessing, came to see the New Left as intellectually and culturally restrictive on artistic freedom: 'They were opening new jars, finding new lids, but they were very ideologically driven as well, and it was that pattern of voting the ticket—even though it was an intellectual one—that became oppressive, emotionally and intellectually. I always kept one foot outside the circle'.<sup>59</sup>

The literary position of *ULR* stemmed largely from the influence of F.W. Bateson, an English Literature tutor at Corpus Christi, whose irreverent iconoclastic brand of criticism endeared him to a whole generation of students including Kingsley Amis, Al Alvarez, Bernard Bergonzi, and Christopher Ricks.<sup>60</sup> Bateson was the Labour Party organizer for Buckinghamshire, who had previously written as the *Observer* agricultural correspondent and produced several Fabian pamphlets on agriculture.<sup>61</sup> Bateson's journal, *Essays in Criticism* (founded 1951), combined a decidedly irreverent tone towards contemporary critics and poets (Eliot once threatened to sue)<sup>62</sup> with an acute awareness of the social role literature should play in post-war British society.<sup>63</sup> In the 1980s radical English academics connected to the New Left attempted to reform the outdated syllabus and invoked the spirit of Bateson.<sup>64</sup> It was at Bateson's seminars that Raymond Williams (who was on the editorial board of *Essays in Criticism*) met Stuart Hall, Gabriel Pearson, and Graham Martin who were all still students. Martin was co-chair of the Oxford Critical Society (founded with Bateson's help in 1950), which was a Trojan Horse of new critical methods in Oxford, inviting critics such as William Empson and F.R. Leavis to speak to

students. It was mainly through the Critical Society that undergraduates and graduate students became aware of the critical revolution on both sides of the Atlantic over the previous decades.<sup>65</sup> Martin became the literature editor for *ULR* and chair of the New Left Literature Group.<sup>66</sup> Martin, Hall, and Pearson were the animating figures behind *ULR*'s literary pages. Martin had originally trained as a chemist in Scotland but took a second degree in English Literature at Oxford with Bateson. Both he and Hall were heavily influenced by the work of Leavis, mercifully tempered through Bateson's leavening influence.<sup>67</sup> Stuart Hall, like so many of his generation, was deeply influenced by Leavis' moral claims for literature and its potential to rid the world of squalid capitalism and 'technologico-Benthamite' materialism. Hall identified Leavis as the sole British exponent of criticism which was aware of the wider social and moral claims of literature. He defined Socialist Humanism using a quote from Leavis, as 'a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity'.<sup>68</sup> Hall demonstrated the catholic interests of Oxford English students, applauding several American critics who 'combine[d], with their social interests, the close attention to the text, and the feel for moral values'. He lamented that, apart from Leavis, 'that tradition is almost exclusively an American affair'.<sup>69</sup> In an article denigrating overly political or didactic literature, Hall compared the flatness of Jack London's *Iron Heel* to the vibrancy of Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. The latter, through its portrayal of life, was far more amenable to the committed critic, offering 'a real tradition, a living tradition—of meaning and relevance. A tradition in *depth* rather than in time. It alters our relationship to those objects of culture—a tradition in the sense of "the presence of the past as well as its pastness"'.<sup>70</sup> The crux of Hall's literary critical position, which would have sat well in the pages of either *Scrutiny* or *Essays in Criticism*, was that 'What concerns us is not that literature is related to life and society, but *how* life gets into literature'.<sup>71</sup>

Michael Armstrong, formerly Chair of the Oxford Labour Club, had previously suggested a role for the socialist critics' role in calling for engaged literature 'in which the action develops out of a social background clearly mastered and dramatized by the artist'.<sup>72</sup> Citing the failures of both the sociologist to explain inner life, and the psychologist to generalize to the social level, the novelist alone could do both: 'The type of art the socialist intellectual is demanding is an art which is not only concerned with contemporary society, but an art which springs from an *understanding* of society, and imparts a vivid feeling for life within it'.<sup>73</sup> Armstrong's call for novels which portrayed and analysed society was echoed by Raymond Williams who called for a revival of the social realist tradition within the novel as a means of recovering 'wholeness' in recording the 'most ordinary business of living'.<sup>74</sup>

In a review of a book by his former colleague, Al Alvarez's *The Shaping Spirit* (1958), Graham Martin sought to stake out a critical programme for the New Left which differed both from Alvarez's liberal sensibilities and the socialist realism of Williams and Armstrong. For Martin, this was too close to instructing the writer in what could and could not be written. Whilst noting the many strengths of Alvarez's outlook, Martin suggested that his abject failure to view poetry within its social context was a wider failing of Liberal criticism. The critic was directly responsible to their society: 'Critics, just as much even though less directly than novelists and dramatists, speak about their time as well as their subject'.<sup>75</sup> The complexity which Martin sought in criticism was neither purely a stress on social forces nor individual talent, but rather a nuanced understanding of the intersection of both.<sup>76</sup> A humane, socially aware approach to criticism, evident in Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1957), avoided the pitfalls of both. Hoggart wrote with Alvarez's geniality and generosity of spirit: 'But there is something else as well, a deeper note, urgent in its way, making a continuous firm appeal to another notion of community than the merely personal'. By contrast, 'Alvarez's imagined audience is a simple aggregation of well-disposed solitaires, an amiable seminar'.<sup>77</sup> The study of literature could provide a window 'on those dim interconnections of individual with social life, the way it both extends and enriches our conscious moral existence, the way it commits us to living'.<sup>78</sup>

A number of novels produced by New Left writers such as Mervyn Jones' *On the Last Day* (1958), Colin MacInnes' *Absolute Beginners* (1959), Raymond Williams's *Border Country* (1960), Clancy Sigal's *Weekend in Dinlock* (1960) attempted to do just this, though most met with a hostile or muted critical reception. Reviewing Sigal's account of a declining Yorkshire mining community for the *TLS*, the decidedly patrician Anthony Lejeune praised the book's vogueish documentary value, but noted that the fictional aspect 'is sketchily drawn and less satisfying; and, of course, not everyone wants to read about lives which are dingy'.<sup>79</sup>



## ‘Where Are All the Angry Young Men Now?’

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Lejeune was echoing the wider exhaustion of the reading public with the 1950s novelists who dealt with the squalid, the provincial, and the working class aspects of British life in favour of the vibrancy and emotional and sexual openness displayed by newer writers such as Sylvia Plath, John Fowles, or Anthony Burgess. The older generation of disaffected novelists and playwrights was commonly (and problematically) referred to as the ‘Angry Young Men’ whose works had sparked off an influential cultural protest in British literary society. They included John Wain’s *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis’ *Lucky Jim* (1954), Colin Wilson’s *The Outsider* (1956), John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956), and John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957). The movement emphasized the social malaise of contemporary post-imperial Britain where affluence, apathy and elitism had eclipsed the social hope of 1945. Naturally, these squared well with the analysis of contemporary society offered by the New Left and the two were often seen as having the same objectives.<sup>80</sup> G.S. Fraser, writing in the *TLS*, astutely equated the New Left to this literary movement: ‘what is called “the New Left” in politics is very much concerned with breaking down the dominance in our cultural life, in our literary monthlies and weeklies, for instance, of what is often called “the genteel tradition”’.<sup>81</sup> This section looks at how New Left writers and critics addressed and equated with the generation of 1950s British writers and suggests that the New Left criticisms of their political apathy promoted the emergence of younger, more politically committed writers towards the end of the decade.

Whilst for the most part accepting their criticisms of a sclerosed contemporary society and the failure of mainstream party politics, the New Left’s stress on ‘Commitment’ went directly against the apolitical self-seeking anti-heroes such as Amis’ Jim Dixon or Osborne’s Jimmy Porter, who famously proclaimed that ‘There aren’t any good, brave causes left’.<sup>82</sup> Though New Left commentators welcomed the criticism of class society which suffused many 1950s novels, the lack of hope in active politics displayed in these novels was criticized in both *NR* and *ULR*.<sup>83</sup> Whilst early critics had applauded the cultural criticism implicit in the work of the ‘Angries’, it became clear that their politics often strayed from progressive to reactionary. Stuart Hall criticized the lack of any positive solutions in the volume of essays by these writers *Declaration* (1957) as a widespread intellectual apathy the New Left and politically committed artists, strove against. For Hall, the solution to this was through the reaffirmation of values which lay both in collective action and in great literature: ‘if our experience is a totality, then a common framework of values, accessible to the political and the creative intellectual alike can be discovered’.<sup>84</sup> Gabriel Pearson’s accusation that John Braine was too much ‘in love with the mud’ which his characters inhabited to criticize the society described in *Room at the Top* was characteristic of the New Left’s ultimate rejection of these novels.<sup>85</sup>

The generation of Angry Young Men eventually became angry (and affluent) middle-aged men whose views increasingly equated to the new right criticisms of permissive society, which emerged from the late 1960s. Whilst Kingsley Amis had been a member of the Communist Party at Oxford in the 1940s, his polemical *Socialism and the Intellectuals* (1957) was a lampoon against the utopian dreams of left-wing intellectuals who believed they could bring culture to the masses earning him the badge of Thompson’s opprobrium.<sup>86</sup> Like other converts to the anti-socialist cause, Amis and Iris Murdoch contributed to the infamous *Black Papers*, which criticized developments in education for undermining the fabric of society.<sup>87</sup> There was a discernible long march from the 1960s onwards of British writers and intellectuals from left to right akin to the Auden generation (as Thompson had feared). These writers saw the excesses of the student population and the academics who goaded them as symptomatic of the moral vacuity of the Left.

Despite qualified defences of the ‘Angries’ attempt to break the cultural complacency of the era, they were increasingly seen as responding to the climate of the early and mid-1950s. Suez, Hungary, and the Aldermaston Marches had galvanized a broad section of young people and intellectuals into a political movement around the New Left whose political hope provided an alternative to the individualist apathy and despair of Osborne and Amis. In ‘A Look Back at Osborne’, Graham Martin argued that the spirit of the ‘bleak early’ fifties no longer held: ‘Osborne uses contemporary social issues not as themes, but as the material for his plays. The Jimmy Porter, lower/upper middle-class tensions, the decay of folk-art, commitment ... Osborne has an ear for these things as a journalist for news’.<sup>88</sup> It was precisely these themes, and Osborne’s demand for immediate social relevance over anything more refined or universal,

that made the film-version of Osborne's play (directed by Tony Richardson, himself no stranger to the New Left movement) appear dated only 3 years after it was first performed.<sup>89</sup> Works by a new generation of playwrights, such as Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1956), *Roots* (1958) and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* (1958), Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958), John Arden's *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959), and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (1960) were welcomed by New Left critics as a concerted development on the impotent rage of 1950s writers.<sup>90</sup> With this were included novels such as John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), and David Caute's *At Fever Pitch* (1959), Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1959), Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving* (1960), and David Storey's *This Sporting Life* (1960) attempted to break away from the 'Angry Young Men' epithet, whilst retaining its sizeable readership.<sup>91</sup> Hall's seminal article on contemporary realism for the theatre magazine *Encore* welcomed the increasing naturalism in British drama from both a literary and political standpoint.<sup>92</sup> This new type of social realist drama foregrounded issues of class, youth, race and homosexuality, whilst cautiously conveying social and political optimism, reflected the spirit of the new decade. A key difference from the predominantly middle class, university educated 'Angries' (and the New Left, for that matter), the majority of these writers came from a northern, working-class background. Of these, Arnold Wesker was the most closely aligned with the New Left and also most concerned with giving drama a particular social purpose by bringing it directly to the people. Wesker's Centre 42, supported by the Trades Union Congress, which unashamedly sought to bring supposedly 'high' culture to the working classes. The Centre staged politically aware works by dramatists such as John Arden, Bertolt Brecht, and Luigi Pirandello.<sup>93</sup> The New Left was an early key supporter and publicist.<sup>94</sup> Wesker published a new short play *The Kitchen* in the first issue of *NLR*.<sup>95</sup> Despite early successes, including a tour of British cities, Centre 42 ran into a number of financial and creative difficulties and closed after several years. Many of these playwrights and novelists were regular attendees and speakers at the cultural hub which was the Universities and Left Review Club (later the New Left Review Club) whose base was the Partisan Coffee House in Soho. Cultural figures who attended the Partisan Coffee House included Doris Lessing, Christopher Logue, John Berger, Naomi Mitchison, Iris Murdoch, Clancy Sigal, and Wolf Mankowitz, the influential theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, the actor John Hurt, and the directors Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz, and Lindsay Anderson.<sup>96</sup> Many of these gave, or contributed to, talks of the state of contemporary literature, theatre, and film and made the Partisan Coffee House a meeting place for London's politically committed cultural elite. Whilst not quite a Left Bank in Soho, Partisan Coffee House provided a space for a committed avant-garde in a place critically lacking in them. A number of these figures (along with John Osborne and Bertrand Russell) were members of the radical unilateralist disarmament group, the Committee of 100. A number of 'New Wave' films directed by Anderson, Richardson, and Reisz brought many social realist 1950s novels and plays to wider audiences and owed their inception to the cultural and social ideas which emerged around the New Left.<sup>97</sup>

The social networks around the *ULR* and *NLR* clubs were important spaces for fostering a cultural avant-garde which, despite its metropolitan and West End setting, was deeply concerned with social and political issues across in provincial working class England as well as with the threat posed by nuclear proliferation. Whilst the New Left was effective in its role of stimulating cultural production, it did little to connect cultural life with the political struggle or, for that matter, to effectively transform wider society. The cultural insurgency of the wider New Left cultural movement remained resolutely unpopular amongst the wider population. Pearson Phillips, in a sympathetic *Daily Mail* article, summed up the plight of the cultural rebels, from John Osborne to Bertrand Russell, who had tried, and failed, to change society: 'It would be very wrong to underestimate the power of this artistic, social and intellectual cleansing operation. And yet, what has it achieved? Nothing, they feel. Nothing at all. The same kind of people are still on top and show no signs of budging or being budged. Damn you England'.<sup>98</sup>

### Passing Criticism: The New Left in the 1960s

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Though early issues of *NLR* engaged with seminal literary events such as Stuart Hall's account of the Lady Chatterley Trial, in which he followed Leavis in declaring the publication ban to be preposterous, and the book second-rate, literature no longer held pride of place within a journal increasingly interested in non-elite forms of culture.<sup>99</sup> In fact, two articles by contemporary writers discussed the possibility of cinema: John Braine, on the decline of local picturehouses, and Alan Sillitoe, on the screenplay adaptation of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.<sup>100</sup> After a third Conservative election victory in 1959 it was

increasingly unclear precisely *how* socially committed literature enacted meaningful social change, rather than being confined to book-reading or play-going elites. The impotent rage of Jimmy Porter and Arthur Seaton, and even the wagging finger of the critic, seemed to have little to do with bringing about a socialist society or preventing nuclear annihilation.

The two strands of criticism represented by the separate journals were at best roughly analogous, holding similar attitudes towards texts and the value of literature. They never quite matched up in *NLR*. Thompson's stress on the transforming power of literature with the correct attitude differed markedly from Hall and Martin's conception of literature's power to criticize and perhaps persuade, but rarely to proselytize. As it turned out, committed writers rarely stayed within the New Left fold for very long, preferring, like Dennis Potter, to keep at least one foot outside the circle. The early New Left failed to produce a particular work of literary criticism akin to works of wider cultural study, such as Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts* (1964).<sup>101</sup> Perry Anderson subsequently claimed that, in their zeal to distance themselves from the excesses of Communist ideology, the early New Left largely fell back on the romantic literary protest of Ruskin, Morris, or Leavis of the kind charted in Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958). This outlook lacked the requisite intellectual rigour both to *critique* and to *change* society, which could only be provided through engagement with European intellectual currents and a resurgent European Marxist interest in theory and structure.<sup>102</sup> Whilst this view was vociferously challenged by Thompson and others, Anderson's assumption of the editorship marked a watershed within the New Left which had already begun to doubt its earlier faith in the redemptive power of words.

The New Left fell between the increasingly disparate stools of academic literary criticism, and that of the ephemeral world of Sunday reviewing. New Left were frequently asked to review for the *TLS*, *Listener*, *New Statesman*, and the newly rebranded (and henceforth non-provincial) *Guardian* by editors increasingly aware of the vogue for left-wing dissidence. Whilst radical intellectuals had only a few years before been censored, they were now fêted. The purpose of literary reviewing in *NLR*, which was shortly to completely rethink its editorial and stylistic (not to say its intellectual) approach under its new editors, had become increasingly unclear when critics could reach far larger audiences (and command greater fees) writing for mainstream media.

In a number of interviews Stuart Hall narrated how he came to reject the stuffy atmosphere at Oxford, where he was writing a thesis on Henry James and the study of English as disconnected from the social and political ideas that dominated his extracurricular life in the New Left.<sup>103</sup> Hall left Oxford to teach in a London comprehensive: exchanging the strained politeness of James' Anglo-American characters for the world of the Notting Hill race riots in which activism supplanted criticism. However, amongst the wider New Left, the shift from literary criticism to wider cultural studies was more muted. Though Williams and Hoggart both published on wider cultural subjects, they also continued to practise formal literary criticism, with Williams remaining a dissident within English Literature. Both Martin and Pearson continued to teach in English Departments. Martin came to a rapprochement with Arnold Kettle when they wrote the first English course for the newly founded Open University in 1970 where Martin became a Reader and later Professor of English Literature, joined by Stuart Hall as Professor of Sociology after 1979.<sup>104</sup> Though Martin was an early proponent and teacher of the works of Benjamin, Adorno, Lukács, and Gramsci, he followed Kettle in refusing to allow the department to become a part of wider cultural studies or cultural and social history.<sup>105</sup> The Open University's course on Literature was both eclectic and yet firmly rooted to an ideal of the social importance of English Literature advocated by the New Left. The *London Review of Books* (1979–) is perhaps a closer realization of the early New Left's literary and cultural vision than *NLR* became, and its editors naturally approached members of the New Left for essays.<sup>106</sup>

The early New Left represented a particular moment in which a group of critics and writers shared rough ideas about the role of literature and criticism in society. In cultural terms at least, it was not an intellectual movement and, as such, had little in the way of successors. It represented a particular moment that attempted to turn the despairing cultural protests of the 1950s towards political ends, drawing on a vernacular tradition of moralistic, freethinking English criticism. The contributors and readers to *NLR* after 1962 largely rejected this style of thought as overly moralistic and obsessed with elitist and parochial cultural questions. Rather, they favoured a more sustained analysis on the problems of global capitalism, drawing on philosophy and sociology. Yet the relative brevity of the early New Left was not necessarily a sign of its failure. Responding to the contemporary social and cultural climate, literary criticism was, and

is, something of an ephemeral subject. The success of the *ULR* and *NLR* Clubs in creating a space of socially informed critical engagement with literature, and particularly drama, was a genuine accomplishment which brought criticism out of the pages of the monthlies and weeklies to direct interaction between writers and audiences under a rallying cry of social relevance. For all its intentions to change the state of British politics, the first British New Left was probably most successful in its influence on British literature, drama, and film whilst, for the most part, failing to turn passive audiences into political activists.

## Acknowledgments

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## Footnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> University of Leeds Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds (hereafter Leeds), Box 47, Tutors' Reports 1949-50.
- <sup>2</sup> Leeds, Box 47, Tutors' Reports 1948-9. See also Andy Croft, 'Walthamstow, Little Gidding and Middlesbrough: Edward Thompson, Adult Education and Literature', *Socialist History*, 8 (1998), 22-48.
- <sup>3</sup> Nick Bentley, *Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s* (Oxford, 2007), esp. 81-124.
- <sup>4</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Outside the Whale', in E. P. Thompson, ed., *Out of Apathy* (London, 1960), 141-94; Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: E. P. Thompson, The New Left and Postwar British Politics* (Manchester, 2011), Chapter 2; Scott Hamilton, 'Between Zhdanov and Bloomsbury: The Poetry and Poetics of E. P. Thompson', *Thesis Eleven*, 95 (2008), 95-112. The contributors to *The God That Failed: A Confession* (1949) were Louis Fischer, André Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, and Richard Wright.
- <sup>5</sup> Duncan Thompson, *Pessimism of the Intellect: A History of New Left Review* (Monmouth, 2009), 1-42.
- <sup>6</sup> John Saville Papers, Hull History Centre, UDJS/108, Thompson to Saville, 9 January 1957.
- <sup>7</sup> Papers of G. D. H. Cole, Nuffield College, Oxford, C/6/22, E. P. Thompson to Cole, 21 February 1957.
- <sup>8</sup> E. P. Thompson to Cole.
- <sup>9</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Caudwell', *Socialist Register* (1977), 228-76; Charles Hobday, *Edgell Rickword: A Poet at War* (Manchester, 1989); Hannah Behrend, 'An Intellectual Irrelevance? Marxist Literary Criticism in the 1930s', in Andy Croft, ed., *A Weapon in the Struggle: The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (London, 1998), 106-22; Victor N. Paananen, *British Marxist Criticism* (London, 2000); Andy Croft, *Comrade at Heart: A Life of Randall Swingler* (Manchester, 2003); Philip Bounds, *British Communism and the Politics of Literature* (Pontypool, 2012).
- <sup>10</sup> Ben Harker, '"Communism is English": Edgell Rickword, Jack Lindsay and the Cultural Politics of the Popular Front', *Literature and History*, 20 (2011), 16-34.
- <sup>11</sup> Jack Lindsay, 'A Note of Self-Criticism', *Communist Review* (March 1950), 93-5; Maurice Cornforth, 'Caudwell and Marxism', *Modern Quarterly*, 6 (1950-1), 16-33; Andy Croft, 'Writers, The Communist Party and the Battle of Ideas, 1945-1950', *Socialist History 5: The Left and Culture* (London, 1995), 14-5, 22. Jack Lindsay, *Life Rarely Tells* (Harmondsworth, 1982), 801-2.
- <sup>12</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Edgell Rickword', supplement to *PN Review*, 6 (1979); Croft, *Comrade at Heart*, 188-9, 192-4.














- <sup>13</sup> Andy Croft, 'Authors Take Sides: Writers and the Communist Party 1920-56' in Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman and Kevin Morgan, eds, *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of Communism* (London, 1995), 98.
- <sup>14</sup> Editors, 'Editorial', *NR*, 1 (1957), 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Editors, 'Editorial', *NR*, 3 (1957), 3; Madeleine Davis, 'The Marxism of the British New Left', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11 (2006), 335–58; Madeleine Davis, 'Reappraising British Socialist Humanism', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 18 (2013), 57–81. On Thompson's wider conception of literature, history and politics see Donald Winch's excellent essay, 'Mr. Gradgrind and Jerusalem', in *Wealth and Life: Essays on the Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1848–1914* (Cambridge, 2009), 367–98.
- <sup>16</sup> James Smith, *British Writers and MI5 Surveillance* (Cambridge, 2013), 75–8.
- <sup>17</sup> Keith Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain: Dissent, Decline and Re-emergence 1945-c.2000* (London, 2006), 57–8.
- <sup>18</sup> Andy Croft, 'The Boys Round the Corner: The Story of Fore Publications', in *A Weapon in the Struggle*, 142–62.
- <sup>19</sup> Edward Corse, *A Battle for Neutral Europe: British Cultural Propaganda During the Second World War* (London, 2013), 39–85.
- <sup>20</sup> Editors, 'Letter to Our Readers', *NR* 6 (1958), 139.
- <sup>21</sup> Franklin Foer, 'Ideas Rule the World', *The New Republic*, 17 March 2011.
- <sup>22</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London, 1989).
- <sup>23</sup> G. L. Arnold, 'Outside the Whale', *Encounter* (August 1960), 76.
- <sup>24</sup> John Saville, 'The Politics of Encounter', *Socialist Register* 1 (1964), 192–207.
- <sup>25</sup> Norman Birnbaum, 'An Open Letter to the Congress for Cultural Freedom', *ULR* 5 (1958), 6; Stephen Spender, Irving Kristol, Dwight Macdonald, and Norman Birnbaum, 'Letters: Congress for Cultural Freedom', *ULR* 6 (1959), 59–61; Saunders, *Who Paid The Piper*, 314–24.
- <sup>26</sup> John Berger, 'Pages from a Painter's Diary', *ULR* 4 (1958), 28–31. Crucially, Berger did not reveal which side Lavin fought for.
- <sup>27</sup> Paul Ignotus, 'Fiddler of Our Time', *Encounter* (February 1959), 76.
- <sup>28</sup> John Berger, 'Afterword (1988)', in *A Painter of Our Time* (London, 1988 [1958]), 196–7; Geoff Dyer, *Ways of Telling: The Work of John Berger* (London, 1985), 36–7. See also Gordon Johnson, 'Writing and Publishing the Cold War: John Berger and Secker and Warburg', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12 (2001), 432–60, who questions the extent of the Congress for Cultural Freedom's involvement in the withdrawal of the book.
- <sup>29</sup> Malcolm MacEwen, *The Greening of a Red* (London, 1991), 203–5.
- <sup>30</sup> Peter Finn and Petra Couvée, *The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book* (London, 2014); Paolo Mancuso, *Inside the Zhivago Affair: The Editorial Adventures of Pasternak's Masterpiece* (Milan, 2013); Francis Stonor Saunders, 'The Writer and the Valet', *London Review of Books*, 25 September 2014.
- <sup>31</sup> Sn. [D.P. Costello], 'Impressions of Boris Pasternak', *NR* 4 (1958), 90. Andrew Kahn has identified this writer as D. P. Costello, Professor of Russian at the University of Manchester, 'Canonical Mandelstam' (2013), 22 unpublished paper accessible at <<http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/files/docs/russian/Andrew%20Kahn%20Canonical%20Mandelstam%20pre-print.pdf>> accessed 14 June 2015.
- <sup>32</sup> Leeds, Box 1, Annual Report for Leeds University Department of Extramural Studies, 1958-9.
- <sup>33</sup> Elmer Borklund, *Contemporary Literary Critics* (London, 1977), 301–4; Dipek Nandy, 'Arnold Kettle and English Marxist Literary Criticism', in Graham Martin and W. R. Owens, eds *Arnold Kettle, Literature and Liberation: Selected Essays* (Manchester, 1988), 1–20; Asha S. Kanwar and Arnold Kettle, 'An Interview with Arnold Kettle', *Social Scientist*, 15 (1987), 54–61.

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- [!\[\]\(8ec8d5dc48934930a762fecf6ecbe179\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>35</sup> Editors, 'Letter to Readers', *NR* 7 (1958), 149–50.
- [!\[\]\(c34a15e67573dae8fbb88f4cbfb0f2e9\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>36</sup> Martin Kettle, 'What MI5's Records on My Father Tell Us about the Uses of Surveillance', *Guardian*, 28 July 2011.
- [!\[\]\(41f06fdeabb4e5a71d06fe8f32a46127\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>37</sup> Arnold Kettle, 'Pasternak's Offence to Russia: The Novel and the Prize', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1958. This elicited numerous letters 7 November, 8 and 10 November 1958, 6. See also Kettle, 'The Artist and Politics', *Marxism Today* (May 1959), 144; 'Reply to Discussion on Artist and Politics', *Marxism Today* (February 1960), 61–6.
- [!\[\]\(18eb66208e65404cce5042d73cf0a851\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>38</sup> Arnold Kettle, 'Pasternak and His Prize: Award "a political act"?' *Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1958, 4. Kettle extended these remarks in 'The Artist and Politics', *Marxism Today* (May 1959), 144–5.
- [!\[\]\(14a9d4de9e6699d41b68e8807e2d5f76\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>39</sup> Valentina Ivasheva, 'Document: Revisionism of Marxism in Britain', *NR* 7, 145, originally published in October, 8 (1958); Sn. [E.P. Thompson], 'Ket and the Pottle', *NR* 9 (1959), 144–8.
- [!\[\]\(415790129e00c225ba52b81c8addfb14\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>40</sup> Arnold Kettle, 'How New is the New Left?', *Marxism Today* (October 1960), 302–3.
- [!\[\]\(fa8e43d6f5da9cf596808674ced6c198\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>41</sup> Iris Murdoch, 'A House of Theory', in Norman Mackenzie, ed., *Conviction* (London, 1958), 218–33. Ken Alexander, 'Review of *Conviction*', *NR* 7 (1958–9), 115–8; Lin Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, 1993), 6–7.
- [!\[\]\(2b564e327fe9708ac2f9320a9ae84c76\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>42</sup> Iris Murdoch, 'Doctor Zhivago', *NR* 7 (1958), 142. Murdoch was introduced to the group through Charles Taylor and later became a member of the expanded editorial board of *ULR*, Norman Birnbaum, 'Up or Down to Oxford', *The Reading Room*, 3: *Writing of the Moment* (2001), 82. She addressed the *ULR* Club on *Doctor Zhivago* on 24 November 1958, Valerie Purton, *An Iris Murdoch Chronology* (Basingstoke, 2007), 79.
- [!\[\]\(484cd33a03c33977d2fcf6bb9cc02435\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>43</sup> Gabriel Pearson, 'Iris Murdoch and the Romantic Novel', *NLR* 13-4 (1962), 137–45.
- [!\[\]\(c885083f23ac65632c3cf77b16f7a193\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>44</sup> Peter J. Conradi, *A Very English Hero: The Making of Frank Thompson* (London, 2012), 123–5.
- [!\[\]\(20f0f5805f0a60636883bdd13c58dc31\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>45</sup> Peter J. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London, 2002), 572, also 457–500.
- [!\[\]\(90f7aa1b3da6a942e186a7e3fdaaf44b\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>46</sup> Doris Lessing, 'The Day that Stalin Died', *NR* 2 (1957).
- [!\[\]\(b2b96e5d9b571004907039c0a8a75b54\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>47</sup> Arnold Kettle, 'Rebels and Causes', *Marxism Today* (March 1958), 67–70.
- [!\[\]\(6285cf242551105b2a630c622e0c55ae\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>48</sup> Doris Lessing, 'The Small Personal Voice', *Declaration* (London, 1957), 12–27.
- [!\[\]\(ea61eebb01e76a95ff1c56cf17f53608\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>49</sup> Doris Lessing, *Walking in the Shade* vol. 2 of *My Autobiography*, 1949–62 (London, 1997), 229; Susan Brook, 'Engendering Rebellion: The Angry Young Man, Class and Masculinity' in Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene, eds, *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-war and Contemporary British Literature* (Amsterdam and New York, 2003), 32; Paul Foot, 'The Lessing Legend', *Socialist Review* (February 1998), 26–7.
- [!\[\]\(bef5c8d7250866df258df26efebb2d6b\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>50</sup> Sn. [Randall Swingler], 'The Fog of War', *TLS*, 27 April 1962, 280; David Kynaston, *Modernity Britain, 1957-1962* (London, 2015), 600.
- [!\[\]\(1855a3a8d9a41a3f4f1dc8d294fd804e\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>51</sup> Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, 314. Lessing still remained bitter about the New Left's treatment of her book many years later: Doris Lessing, 'In Defence of Raymond Williams', *London Review of Books*, 5 April 1990.
- [!\[\]\(4bff6b8888da539b37a899aef567f1be\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>52</sup> Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, 364.
- [!\[\]\(1a1b0261b18044c47100576c25c435f9\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>53</sup> Stuart Hall, 'In No Man's Land', *ULR* 3 (1957), 86–7.
- [!\[\]\(7b1db38756a02e50672c39a699367588\_img.jpg\)](#)<sup>54</sup> Lawrence Goldman, *Dons and Workers: Oxford and Adult Education Since 1850* (Oxford, 1995), 258–98, 292–4; Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London, 1995), 115–6; Roger Fieldhouse, 'Cold War and Colonial Conflicts in British West African Adult Education 1947–53', *History of Education Quarterly*, 24, 3 (1984), 357–71; Fieldhouse, *Adult Education and the Cold War: Liberal Values Under Siege 1946–1951* (Leeds, 1985); Roger Fieldhouse, 'Oxford and Adult Education', in W. John Morgan and Peter Preston, eds, *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education, Letters* (Basingstoke, 1993), 47–64.

- <sup>55</sup> Dennis L. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC, 1997) 55; Chun, *New Left*, 12; Stuart Hall, 'The Life and Times of the First New Left', *NLR*, 2nd series, 61 (2010), 181; Brian Harrison, 'Politics', in Brian Harrison, ed., *The History of the University of Oxford, VIII: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1994), 401; Robert Hewison, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War, 1945-60* (London, 1981), 182-3.
- <sup>56</sup> Dennis Potter, *The Glittering Coffin* (London, 1960), 101.
- <sup>57</sup> Potter, *The Glittering Coffin*, 91-4, 100-3. Christopher Gray, 'Did Labour's Top Man Save the Student Play?', *Oxford Mail*, 13 March 2014; Humphrey Carpenter, *Dennis Potter: A Biography* (London, 1998), 93-5.
- <sup>58</sup> Potter, *Glittering Coffin*, 93.
- <sup>59</sup> Dennis Potter, *Potter on Potter*, ed. Graham Fuller (London, 1993), 13; Carpenter, *Potter*, 218.
- <sup>60</sup> Seamus Perry, 'E in C as a Critical Forum', *Essays in Criticism*, li (2001), 161-84; Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford, 1980), 8, 28, 31, 113, 116, 136-7; Alvarez, *Where Did It All Go Right?* (London 1999), chapter 7; Bernard Bergonzi, *Exploding English: Criticism, Theory, Culture* (Oxford, 1990), 5-8; Kingsley Amis, *Memoirs* (London, 1991), 103; Zachary Leader, *Kingsley Amis: A Life* (London, 2006), 207-10; Kingsley Amis, *Letters of Kingsley Amis*, ed. Zachary Leader (London, 2001), 188; Christopher Ricks, 'Interview with Christopher Ricks', *Oxford University English Faculty News*, 2 (2009), 5-6.
- <sup>61</sup> Valentine Cunningham, 'F.W. Bateson', *Pelican Record of Corpus Christi College*, (1979-80), 84-5; René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950: English Criticism, 1900-1950* (London, 1986), 265-74; Alexander Hutton, 'The Idea of an English School: Literature, Politics, and the University, 1932-1965', *English* (forthcoming).
- <sup>62</sup> Timothy Materer, 'T.S. Eliot and his Biographical Critics', *Essays in Criticism*, 62 (2012), 41-57.
- <sup>63</sup> F. W. Bateson, 'Editorial Note', *Essays in Criticism*, i (1951), i; Borklund, *Contemporary Literary Critics*, 52.
- <sup>64</sup> Sn., 'F.W. Bateson on "The Scandal of the Oxford English School"', *News From Nowhere* (April 1986), 48-9. O. E. L.'s inaugural conference included Daniel Cohen, Terry Eagleton, Thomas Docherty, and Val Cunningham from Oxford as well as Jacqueline Rose, Marilyn Butler, Raymond Williams, Colin McCabe, and Christopher Norris.
- <sup>65</sup> Al Alvarez, 'Goodbye to All That: Interview with Ian Hamilton', *The New Review*, 4 (1978), 12-3. Al Alvarez, *Where Did it All Go Right?* (London, 1999), 113-5; Wallace Martin, 'Criticism and the Academy' in A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand and Lawrence Rainey, eds, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vii: Modernism and the New Criticism* (Cambridge, 2000), 311-3; Jose Harris, 'The Arts and Social Sciences, 1939-1970', in *History of the University of Oxford* [vol. viii] (Oxford, 1994), 239-41.
- <sup>66</sup> Hall, 'Life and Times', 182; Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 84-6; Inglis, *Williams*, 144-5. Christopher Hill was also a friend of Bateson's and contributor to *Essays in Criticism*, Christopher Hill, 'Radical Prose in 17th Century England: From Marprelate to the Levellers', *Essays in Criticism*, xxxii (1982), 95.
- <sup>67</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Graham Martin', *Guardian*, 12 February 2004; Dennis Walder, 'Graham Martin', *Independent*, 14 February 2014; Christopher Harvie, 'Graham Martin', *The Herald*, 25 February 2004; Patrick Parrinder, 'Left-Leavisism and After: Graham Martin and Arnold Kettle as Critics of the Novel', *Keywords: A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, 6 (2008).
- <sup>68</sup> Stuart Hall, 'In No Man's Land', *ULR* 3 (1957), 87; Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, 60. Davis, 'Reappraising Socialist Humanism', 342-3, 354-5, suggests this reliance on 'culturalism' and the Communist radical tradition was problematic and unhelpful. Hall, 'First New Left', 16, 18-9; Hall, 'Life and times', 179.
- <sup>69</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Review of Irving Howe's *Politics and the Novel*', *ULR* 2 (1957), 73. These critics were Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Philip Rhav, and R. P. Blackmuir.
- <sup>70</sup> Hall, 'Review of Irving Howe's *Politics and the Novel*', 14-5. The quote is from T. S. Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919).

- <sup>71</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Inside the Whale Again', *ULR* 4 (1958), 14. See also David Craig, 'Live and Dead Studies', *NLR* 12 (1961), 59–61 which espoused Leavis' views.
- <sup>72</sup> Michael Armstrong, 'Commitment in Criticism', *ULR* 2 (1957), 65.
- <sup>73</sup> Armstrong, 'Commitment in Criticism', *ULR* 2 (1957) 66. Michael Armstrong later became an educational psychologist and a headteacher, writing *New Look at Comprehensive Schools* (1964) (with Michael Young) and *Closely Observed Children: The Diary of A Primary Classroom* (1983).
- <sup>74</sup> Raymond Williams, 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel', *ULR* 4 (1958), 25. See also Williams, 'The Realism of Arthur Miller', *ULR* 7 (1959).
- <sup>75</sup> Graham Martin, 'The End of liberal Criticism', *ULR* 4 (1958), 25.
- <sup>76</sup> Martin, 'The End of liberal Criticism', 26.
- <sup>77</sup> Martin, 'The End of liberal Criticism', 28.
- <sup>78</sup> Martin, 'The End of liberal Criticism', 28.
- <sup>79</sup> Anthony Lejeune, 'Reluctant Young Louts', *TLS*, 22 January 1960, 45.
- <sup>80</sup> Dan Rebellato, *1956 And All That: The Making of Modern British Drama* (London, 1999), 17–21; Lawrence Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain 1951-64: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke, 2003), 65–93, esp. 74–5.
- <sup>81</sup> G. S. Fraser, 'Roots', *TLS*, 11 March 1960, 129; Kynaston, *Modernity Britain*, 387.
- <sup>82</sup> W. I. Carr, 'Mr Osborne and an Indifferent Society', *ULR* 4 (1958), 32–3.
- <sup>83</sup> Armstrong, 'Commitment and Criticism', 65.
- <sup>84</sup> Hall, 'In No Man's Land', 87. On the wider context see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, 2006), 159–65; Hewison, *In Anger*, 136–40.
- <sup>85</sup> Gabriel Pearson, 'Review of *Room at the Top*', *ULR* 2 (1957), 73.
- <sup>86</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Socialism and the Intellectuals', *ULR* 1 (1957), 32–4; Morrison, *The Movement*, 248–50; Leader, *Amis*, 365–9.
- <sup>87</sup> Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London, 2003), 115–8, 120–4; Christopher Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The Scrutiny Movement* (Cambridge, 2012), 117–25; Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties 1960-75* (London, 1986), 195–6; Brian Cox, *The Great Betrayal* (London, 1992), 105–24; C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson, 'Literary Criticism', in *The Twentieth Century Mind: History, Ideas, and Literature in Britain, 3: 1945-65* (Oxford, 1972), 440–3, 460.
- <sup>88</sup> Graham Martin, 'A Look Back at Osborne', *ULR* 7 (1959), 38.
- <sup>89</sup> Martin, 'A Look Back at Osborne', 46. Osborne was, in fact, a major figure in anti-nuclear movement.
- <sup>90</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Taste of the Real Thing', *ULR* 6 (1959), 61–2; Stuart Hall, 'Roots', *ULR* 7 (1959), 52–3; Stuart Hall, 'Absolute Beginnings', *ULR* 7 (1959); Stuart Hall, 'Serjeant Musgrave's Dance', *NLR* 1 (1960), 50–1; Michael Kaye, 'The New Drama', *NLR* 5 (1960), 64–6; Albert Hunt, 'This Year's Theatre', *NLR* 7 (1961), 53–57; Tom Milne, 'Luther and the Devils', *NLR* 12 (1961), 55–8. Stephen Lacey, *British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in its Context 1956-1965* (London, 1995), 37–9.
- <sup>91</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Oxford, 1989), 257–9.
- <sup>92</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The First Five Years', *Encore* (November 1961), reprinted in Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, Owen Hale, eds, *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties: Selections from Encore Magazine, 1956-63* (London, 1965), 212–20; Lacey, *British Realist Theatre*, 38.
- <sup>93</sup> Arnold Wesker, 'Trade Unions and the Arts', *NLR* 5 (1960), 67; Lawrence Black, 'Cultural Turns: Wesker's Centre 42, the Roundhouse and the Politics of Culture', in Lawrence Black, ed., *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke, 2010), 139–71; Hewison, *Too Much*, 17–23.
- <sup>94</sup> Ron Deller, 'Centre 42', *NLR* 11 (1961), 60–1; Lacey, *British Realist Theatre*, 89.
- <sup>95</sup> Arnold Wesker, 'The Kitchen', *NLR* 1 (1960), 32–7.



- <sup>96</sup> Arnold Wesker, *As Much as I Dare: An Autobiography (1932-1959)* (London, 1994), 458, 463–5, 518–9, 525–6; Rebellato, *1956 And All That*, 17, 20, 32–3; Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, 204–6. One of the first performances of Wesker's *Chicken Soup With Barley* was a block booking for the ULR club and trade unionists. See also Mike Berlin, 'The Partisan Coffee House: Cultural Politics and the Early New Left', talk given at the Bishopsgate Institute 11 June 2009, <<http://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/audios.aspx?vid=7563>> accessed 2 June 2015.
- <sup>97</sup> Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War: The State, Propaganda and Consensus* (London, 2001), 166–7, 192; Colin Gardner, *Karel Reisz* (Manchester, 2006), 52–98.
- <sup>98</sup> Pearson Phillips, *Daily Mail*, 1 March 1962, cited in Kynaston, *Modernity Britain*, 818. The final phrase echoes John Osborne's 'Letter to My Fellow Countrymen' to *Tribune*, 18 August 1961.
- <sup>99</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', *NLR* 6 (1960), 35, 'There is no point overpraising the novel, for it will not bear it. There is no point underpraising it either. Without it, Lawrence's last years do not make any sense. Is there any need to say that a society which had any notion at all of the value of literature would long ago have put it back in place?'
- <sup>100</sup> John Braine, 'The Bug House', *NLR* 1 (1960); Alan Sillitoe, 'What Comes on Monday', *NLR* 4 (1960).
- <sup>101</sup> Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, 182–5. Graham Martin, Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and David Holbrook (as well as Kettle) contributed chapters to *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, 7: *The Modern Age* (1961).
- <sup>102</sup> Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *NLR* 50 (1968), 3–57
- <sup>103</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chun and Stuart Hall, 'Interview: The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual', in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chun, eds, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996), 484–507; Stuart Hall, 'Interview with Colin McCabe', in *Critical Quarterly*, 50 (2008), 19; Hall, 'Life and Times', 177–96. David Morley and Bill Schwarz, 'Stuart Hall', *Guardian*, 10 February 2014; Marcus Williamson, 'Stuart Hall', *Independent*, 11 February 2014; Sn., 'Stuart Hall', *Telegraph*, 11 February 2014; Simon During, 'Stuart Hall', *Cultural Studies Review*, 20 (2014), 302–6; Simon Blackburn, 'Stuart Hall, 1932-2014', *New Left Review*, 2nd series, 86 (2014), 75–93.
- <sup>104</sup> Christopher Harvie, 'Graham Martin', *The Herald*, 25 February 2004.
- <sup>105</sup> Graham Martin, 'Teaching Literature in the Open University' in Peter Widdowson, ed., *Re-Reading English* (London, 1992), 91–104.
- <sup>106</sup> Stefan Collini, 'A Life in Politics: New Left Review at 50', *Guardian*, 13 February 2010.